

## Message Text

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ACTION PM-03

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 EB-07 COME-00 TRSE-00 MC-02

ACDA-05 AID-05 OMB-01 CIAE-00 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /077 W

----- 028845

R 051702Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3816

SECDEF WASHDC

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 3979

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, BE

SUBJECT: F-104 REPLACEMENT: STATUS AS OF MAY 5

REF: BRUSSELS 3708

SUMMARY: BELGIANS HAVE HELD TWO MORE MEETINGS: FIRST AT WORKING LEVEL WITH FRENCH, GERMANS AND DUTCH ON APRIL 30; SECOND, AT CABINET LEVEL WITH DUTCH MAY 3. NO DECISIONS TAKEN OR EXPECTED UNTIL AFTER PRIME MINISTER TINDEMANS' VISIT TO PARIS ON MAY 9 AND POSSIBLY NOT BY MAY 15. ANOTHER MEETING OF CONSORTIUM COUNTRY MODS IS EXPECTED ON MAY 12. END SUMMARY.

1. BELGIAN DIRECTOR OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS DAVIGNON CHAIRED A MEETING APRIL 30 WHICH WAS ATTENDED BY FRENCH AMBASSADOR, GERMAN FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL AND  
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UNSPECIFIED DUTCH REP. WE ARE INFORMED THAT PURPOSE OF

MEETING WAS TO EXPLORE FURTHER WHAT STEPS FRANCE MIGHT TAKE TOWARDS MILITARY COOPERATION WITHIN NATO, SHOULD BELGIUM OPT FOR THE MIRAGE. PURPOSE OF MEETING WAS NOT RPT NOT TO DISCUSS HYPOTHETICAL JOINT PRODUCTION OF YET ANOTHER F-104 REPLACEMENT AIRCRAFT. ACCORDING TO OUR INFO, NO AGREEMENT WAS REACHED AND GERMANY HELD TO THEIR POSITION THAT BRITISH AND ITALIANS SHOULD BE INVITED TO JOIN IN ANY FURTHER DISCUSSIONS. WEST GERMAN MOD IS REPORTED TO HAVE SENT BELGIAN MOD LETTER SAYING FRG ALWAYS WELCOMED DISCUSSIONS, BUT DID NOT WANT TO GET INVOLVED IN DUPLICATING WORK ALREADY DONE. BELGIAN PRESS EXPECTS FURTHER TALKS BY THIS GROUP BUT NO DATES HAVE BEEN SET.

3. BELGIAN-DUTCH MAY 3 MEETING WAS HELD FOR THREE HOURS BETWEEN PRIME MINISTERS ACCOMPANIED BY THEIR FOREIGN, DEFENSE, FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS MINISTERS, PLUS ON BELGIAN SIDE MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS AND SECRETARY OF STATE OF THE WALLOON REGION ECONOMY (WHO REPRESENTS KEY TINDEMANS GOVERNMENT COALITION PARTY, THE RW)-- SEE REFTEL). IT WAS CAREFULLY IDENTIFIED IN ADVANCE AS ANOTHER EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON THE REPLACEMENT ISSUE, NOT AS A DECISION-MAKING SESSION. PRIME MINISTER TINDEMANS TOLD PRESS THAT BELGIAN DECISION WOULD NOT BE TAKEN BEFORE HIS MAY 9 TRIP TO PARIS (SEE FOLLOWING PARA) AND SAID FURTHER THAT HE COULD NOT STATE FLTY THAT DECISION WOULD BE TAKEN BY MAY 15.

3. PRIME MINISTER TINDEMANS WILL PARTICIPATE IN HIS EC-9 DESIGNATED "WISEMAN" ROLE IN MAY 9 COUNCIL OF EUROPE CEREMONIES IN PARIS TO CELEBRATE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF SCHUMAN DECLARATION. ACCORDING TO FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS, TINDEMANS IS STILL COLLECTING IDEAS ON EUROPEAN INTEGRATION AND HAS NOT YET REACHED THE STAGE OF FORMING RECOMMENDATIONS. HE WILL MEET WITH PRESIDENT GISCARD, AND WHILE REPLACEMENT ISSUE IS NOT ON THEIR AGENDA, IT WILL COME UP IN THE CONTEXT OF THE FUTURE OF EUROPE.

4. FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL INFORMED US OF FOLLOWING IN CONNECTION WITH APRIL 30 FOUR-COUNTRY MEETING AND "UNSCHEDULED" TINDEMANS-GISCARD TALKS ON AIRPLANES. THE ISSUE IS "EUROPEAN PREFERENCE" A PHRASE WHICH MEANS BUYING FROM AN EUROPEAN SUPPLIER WHEN A EUROPEAN COUNTRY IS SHOPPING FOR A CONFIDENTIAL

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NEEDED WEAPONS SYSTEM. THE QUESTION BEFORE THE HOUSE (BELGIUM, IN PARTICULAR) IS WHETHER THE LWF ACQUISITION SHOULD BE DECIDED ON THE BASIS OF "EUROPEAN PREFERENCE". THE FRENCH NATURALLY SAY THAT IT SHOULD - IN SHORT, THE F-1 IS A SUITABLE REPLACEMENT FOR THE F-104 AND, OTHER THINGS BEING EQUAL OR ALMOST EQUAL, IT SHOULD BE CHOSEN ON THE BASIS OF EUROPEAN PREFERENCE. THE TROUBLE WITH THIS POSITION - FROM THE BELGIAN AND OTHER EURO COUNTRIES'

STANDPOINT - IS THAT FRANCE IS NOT CO-EQUAL WITH EUROPE.  
WHAT COMMITMENT WILL FRANCE MAKE TO EUROPEAN PREFERENCE  
IN PRINCIPLE - I.E., WILL FRANCE COMMIT TO BUY EUROPEAN IF THE  
NEXT WEAPONS SYSTEM IS NOT FRENCH? FRANCE HAS AID, "WE ARE  
READY TO TALK ABOUT A COMMITMENT TO EUROPEAN PREFERENCE, BUT  
WE MUST TALK ABOUT EXISTING PROGRAMS. AFTER ALL, IF YOU DO NOT  
BUY FRENCH IN THE LWF REPLACEMENT QUESTION THEN WHAT IS THE USE  
OF MAKING A "EUROPEAN" COMMITMENT? LET US BEGIN THE POLICY OF  
EUROPEAN PREFERENCE BY BUYING THE EUROPEAN (FRENCH) OFFERING  
IN THE LWF ACQUISITION DECISION." OTHER COUNTRIES COUNTER  
THE FRENCH ARGUMENT BY SAYING THAT THE FRENCH LWF IS NOT THE  
ONLY EXISTING WEAPONS PROGRAM. THE MRCA EXISTS. IT FLIES. WHAT  
IS FRANCE'S POSITION ON THE MRCA? FRANCE HAS SO FAR AVOIDED A  
REPLY. IT HAS OFFERED NO COMMITMENT TO A EUROPEAN  
PREFERENCE IN THE FUTURE IF THE WEAPONS SYSTEM TURNS OUT NOT  
TO BE FRENCH. IF FRANCE IS UNABLE TO MAKE A CONVINCING  
COMMITMENT TO EUROPE, CONSORTIUM COUNTRIES WILL HAVE TO MAKE  
LWF DECISION "ON ITS MERITS AND TRY FOR A  
EUROPEAN COMMITMENT ANOTHER DAY".

5. FURTHER MEETING OF FOUR CONSORTIUM COUNTRY MODS  
IS EXPECTED O/A MAY 12.FIRESTONE

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## Message Attributes

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